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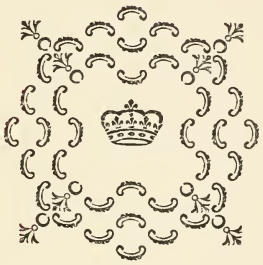
THE QUEEN'S MUSEUM

BY

FRANK STOCKTON



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THE QUEEN'S MUSEUM

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THERE was once a Queen who founded, in her capital city, a grand museum. This institution was the pride of her heart, and she devoted nearly all her time to overseeing the collection of objects for it, and their arrangement in the spacious halls. This museum was intended to elevate the intelligence of her people, but the result was quite disappointing to the Queen. For some reason, and what it was she could not imagine, the people were not interested in her museum. She considered it the most

delightful place in the world, and spent hours every day in examining and studying the thousands of objects it contained; but although here and there in the city there was a person who cared to visit the collection, the great body of the people found it impossible to feel the slightest interest in it. At first this grieved the Queen, and she tried to make her museum better; but as this did no good, she became very angry, and she issued a decree that all persons of mature age who were not interested in her museum should be sent to prison.

This decree produced a great sensation in the city. The people crowded to the building, and did their very best to be interested; but, in the majority of cases, the attempt was an utter failure. They could not feel any interest whatever. The consequence was that hundreds and thousands

of the people were sent to prison, and as there was not room enough for them in the ordinary jails, large temporary prisons were erected in various parts of the city. Those persons who were actually needed for work or service which no one else could do were allowed to come out in the daytime on parole; but at night they had to return to their prisons.

It was during this deplorable state of affairs that a stranger entered the city one day. He was surprised at seeing so many prisons, and approaching the window in one of them, behind the bars of which he saw a very respectable-looking citizen, he asked what all this meant. The citizen informed him how matters stood, and then, with tears mounting to his eyes, he added:

'Oh, sir, I have tried my best to be interested in that museum; but it is impossible; I cannot make myself care for it in

the slightest degree! And, what is more, I know I shall never be able to do so; and I shall languish here for the rest of my days.'

Passing on, the Stranger met a mother coming out of her house. Her face was pale, and she was weeping bitterly. Filled with pity, he stopped and asked her what was the matter. 'Oh, sir,' she said, 'for a week I have been trying, for the sake of my dear children, to take an interest in that museum. For a time I thought I might do it, but the hopes proved false. It is impossible. I must leave my little ones, and go to prison.'

The Stranger was deeply affected by these cases and many others of a similar character, which he soon met with. 'It is too bad! too bad!' he said to himself. 'I never saw a city in so much trouble. There is scarcely a family, I am told, in which

there is not some uninterested person—I must see the Queen and talk to her about it,' and with this he wended his way to the palace.

He met the Queen just starting out on her morning visit to the museum. When he made it known that he was a stranger, and desired a short audience, she stopped and spoke to him.

'Have you visited my museum yet?' she said. 'There is nothing in the city so well worth your attention as that. You should go there before seeing anything else. You have a high forehead, and an intelligent expression, and I have no doubt that it will interest you greatly. I am going there myself, and I shall be glad to see what effect that fine collection has upon a stranger.'

This did not suit the Stranger at all. From what he had heard he felt quite sure that if he went to the museum, he would

soon be in jail; and so he hurried to propose a plan which had occurred to him while on his way to the palace.

'I came to see your Majesty on the subject of the museum,' he said, 'and to crave permission to contribute to the collection some objects which shall be interesting to every one. I understand that it is highly desirable that every one should be interested.'

'Of course it is,' said the Queen, 'and although I think that there is not the slightest reason why every one should not feel the keenest interest in what the museum already contains, I am willing to add to it whatever may make it of greater value.'

'In that case,' said the Stranger, 'no time should be lost in securing what I wish to present.'

'Go at once,' said the Queen. 'But how soon can you return?'

'It will take some days, at least,' said the Stranger.

'Give me your parole to return in a week,' said the Queen, 'and start immediately.'

The Stranger gave his parole and left the palace. Having filled a leathern bag with provisions from a cook's shop, he went out of the city gates. As he walked into the open country, he said to himself:

'I have certainly undertaken a very difficult enterprise. Where I am to find anything that will interest all the people in that city, I am sure I do not know; but my heart is so filled with pity for the great number of unfortunate persons who are torn from their homes and shut up in prison, that I am determined to do something for them, if I possibly can. There must be some objects to be found in this vast country that will interest every one.'

About noon he came to a great mountain-side covered with a forest. Thinking that he was as likely to find what he sought in one place as another, and preferring the shade to the sun, he entered the forest, and walked for some distance along a path which gradually led up the mountain. Having crossed a brook with its edges lined with water-cresses, he soon perceived a large cave, at the entrance of which sat an aged hermit. 'Ah,' said the Stranger to himself, 'this is indeed fortunate! This good and venerable man, who passes his life amid the secrets of nature, can surely tell me what I wish to know.' Saluting the Hermit, he sat down and told the old man the object of his quest.

'I am afraid you are looking for what you will not find,' said the Hermit. 'Most people are too silly to be truly interested in anything. They herd together like cat-

tle, and do not know what is good for them. There are now on this mountain-side many commodious and comfortable caves, all of which would be tenanted if people only knew how improving and interesting it is to live apart from their fellow-men. But, so far as it can be done, I will help you in your quest, which I think is a worthy one. I can do nothing for you myself, but I have a pupil who is very much given to wandering about, and looking for curious things. He may tell you where you will be able to find something that will interest everybody, though I doubt it. You may go and see him, if you like, and I will excuse him from his studies for a time, so that he may aid you in your search.'

The Hermit then wrote an excuse upon a piece of parchment, and, giving it to

the Stranger, he directed him to the cave of his pupil.

This was situated at some distance, and higher up the mountain, and when the Stranger reached it, he found the Pupil fast asleep upon the ground. This individual was a long-legged youth, with long arms, long hair, a long nose, and a long face. When the Stranger awakened him, told him why he had come, and gave him the hermit's excuse, the sleepy eyes of the Pupil brightened, and his face grew less long.

'That's delightful!' he said, 'to be let off on a Monday; for I generally have to be satisfied with a half-holiday, Wednesdays and Saturdays.'

'Is the Hermit very strict with you?' asked the Stranger.

'Yes,' said the Pupil, 'I have to stick closely to the cave; though I have been

known to go fishing on days when there was no holiday. I have never seen the old man but once, and that was when he first took me. You know it wouldn't do for us to be too sociable. That wouldn't be hermit-like. He comes up here on the afternoons I am out, and writes down what I am to do for the next half-week.'

'And do you always do it?' asked the Stranger.

'Oh, I get some of it done,' said the Pupil; 'but there have been times when I have wondered whether it wouldn't have been better for me to have been something else. But I have chosen my profession, and I suppose I must be faithful to it. We will start immediately on our search; but first I must put the cave in order, for the old man will be sure to come up while I am gone.'

So saying, the Pupil opened an old

parchment book at a marked page, and laid it on a flat stone, which served as a table, and then placed a skull and a couple of bones in a proper position near by.

The two now started off, the Pupil first putting a line and hook in his pocket, and pulling out a fishing-rod from under some bushes.

'What do you want with that?' asked the Stranger, 'we are not going to fish!'

'Why not?' said the Pupil; 'if we come to a good place, we might catch something that would be a real curiosity.'

Before long they came to a mountain brook, and here the Pupil insisted on trying his luck. The Stranger was a little tired and hungry, and so was quite willing to sit down for a time and eat something from his bag. The Pupil ran off to find some bait, and he stayed away so long that the Stranger had quite finished his meal before

he returned. He came back at last, however, in a state of great excitement.

'Come with me! come with me!' he cried. 'I have found something that is truly astonishing! Come quickly!'

The Stranger arose and hurried after the Pupil, whose long legs carried him rapidly over the mountain-side. Reaching a large hole at the bottom of a precipitous rock, the Pupil stopped, and exclaiming: 'Come in here and I will show you something that will amaze you!' he immediately entered the hole.

The Stranger, who was very anxious to see what curiosity he had found, followed him some distance along a narrow and winding underground passage. The two suddenly emerged into a high and spacious cavern, which was lighted by openings in the roof; on the floor, in various places, were strongly fastened boxes, and pack-

ages of many sorts, bales and bundles of silks and rich cloths, with handsome caskets, and many other articles of value.

'What kind of a place is this?' exclaimed the Stranger, in great surprise.

'Don't you know?' cried the Pupil, his eyes fairly sparkling with delight. 'It is a robber's den! Isn't it a great thing to find a place like this?'

'A robber's den!' exclaimed the Stranger in alarm; 'let us get out of it as quickly as we can, or the robbers will return, and we shall be cut to pieces.'

'I don't believe they are coming back very soon,' said the Pupil, 'and we ought to stop and take a look at some of these things.'

'Fly, you foolish youth!' cried the Stranger; 'you do not know what danger you are in.' And, so saying, he turned to hasten away from the place.

But he was too late. At that moment the robber captain and his band entered the cave. When these men perceived the Stranger and the Hermit's Pupil, they drew their swords and were about to rush upon them, when the Pupil sprang forward and, throwing up his long arms, exclaimed:

'Stop! it is a mistake!'

At these words, the robber captain lowered his sword, and motioned to his men to halt. 'A mistake!' he said; 'what do you mean by that?'

'I mean,' said the Pupil, 'that I was out looking for curiosities, and wandered into this place by accident. We haven't taken a thing. You may count your goods, and you will find nothing missing. We have not even opened a box, although I very much wanted to see what was in some of them.'

'Are his statements correct?' said the Captain, turning to the Stranger.

'Entirely so,' was the answer.

'You have truthful features, and an honest expression,' said the Captain, 'and I do not believe you would be so dishonorable as to creep in here during our absence and steal our possessions. Your lives shall be spared, but you will be obliged to remain with us; for we cannot allow any one who knows our secret to leave us. You shall be treated well, and shall accompany us in our expeditions; and if your conduct merits it, you shall in time be made full members.'

Bitterly the Stranger now regretted his unfortunate position. He strode up and down one side of the cave, vowing inwardly that never again would he allow himself to be led by a Hermit's Pupil. That individual, however, was in a state of high

delight. He ran about from box to bale, looking at the rare treasures which some of the robbers showed him.

The two captives were fed and lodged very well; and the next day the Captain called them and the band together, and addressed them.

'We are now twenty-nine in number,' he said; 'twenty-seven full members, and two on probation. Tonight we are about to undertake a very important expedition, in which we shall all join. We shall fasten up the door of the cave, and at the proper time I shall tell you to what place we are going.'

An hour or two before midnight the band set out, accompanied by the Stranger and the Hermit's Pupil; and when they had gone some miles the Captain halted them to inform them of the object of the expedition. 'We are going,' he said, 'to rob

the Queen's museum. It is the most important business we have ever undertaken.'

At these words the Stranger stepped forward and made a protest. 'I left the city yesterday,' he said, 'commissioned by the Queen to obtain one or more objects of interest for her museum; and to return now to rob an institution which I have promised to enrich will be simply impossible.'

'You are right,' said the Captain, after a moment's reflection, 'such an action would be highly dishonorable on your part. If you will give me your word of honor that you will remain by this stone until our return, the expedition will proceed without you.'

The Stranger gave his word, and having been left sitting upon the stone, soon dropped asleep, and so remained until he was awakened by the return of the band,

a little before daylight. They came slowly toiling along, each man carrying an enormous bundle upon his back. Near the end of the line was the Hermit's Pupil, bearing a load as heavy as any of the others. The Stranger offered to relieve him for a time of his burden, but the Pupil would not allow it.

'I don't wish these men to think I can't do as much as they can,' he said. 'You ought to have been along. We had a fine time! We swept that museum clean, I tell you! We didn't leave a thing on a shelf or in a case.'

'What sort of things are they,' asked the Stranger.

'I don't know,' replied the Pupil, 'we didn't have any light for fear people would notice it, but the moon shone in bright enough for us to see all the shelves and the cases; and our orders were not to

try and examine anything, but to take all that was there. The cases had great cloth covers on them, and we spread these on the floor and made bundles of the curiosities. We are going to examine them carefully as soon as we get to the den.'

It was broad daylight when the robbers reached their cave. The bundles were laid in a great circle on the floor, and, at a given signal, they were opened. For a moment each robber gazed blankly at the contents of his bundle, and then they all began to fumble and search among the piles of articles upon the cloths; but after a few minutes, they arose, looking blanker and more disappointed than before.

'So far as I can see,' said the Captain, 'there is nothing in the whole collection that I care for. I do not like a thing here!'

'Nor I!' 'Nor I!' 'Nor I!' cried each one of his band.

'I suppose,' said the Captain, after musing for a moment, 'that as these things are of no use to us, we are bound in honor to take them back.'

'Hold!' said the Stranger, stepping forward; 'do not be in too great a hurry to do that.' He then told the Captain of the state of affairs in the city, and explained in full the nature of the expedition he had undertaken for the Queen. 'I think it would be better,' he said, 'if these things were not taken back for the present. If you have a safe place where you can put them, I will in due time tell the Queen where they are, and if she chooses she can send for them.'

'Good!' said the Captain, 'it is but right that she should bear part of the labor of transportation. There is a disused cave, a mile or so away, and we will tie up these bundles and carry them there; and then we shall leave the matter to you. We take

no further interest in it. And if you have given your parole to the Queen to return in a week,' the Captain further continued, 'of course you'll have to keep it. Did you give your parole also?' he asked, turning to the Pupil.

'Oh, no!' cried that youth; 'there was no time fixed for my return. And I am sure that I like a robber's life much better than that of a hermit. There is ever so much more spice and dash in it.'

The Stranger was then told that if he would promise not to betray the robbers he might depart. He gave the promise; but added sadly that he had lost so much time that he was afraid he would not now be able to attain the object of his search and return within the week.

'If that is the case,' said the Captain, 'we will gladly assist you. Comrades!' he cried, addressing his band, 'after stowing this

useless booty in the disused cave, and taking some rest and refreshment, we will set out again, and the object of our expedition shall be to obtain something for the Queen's museum which will interest every one.'

Shortly after midnight the robbers set out, accompanied by the Stranger and the Pupil. When they had walked about an hour, the Captain, as was his custom, brought them to a halt that he might tell them where they were going. 'I have concluded,' said he, 'that no place is so likely to contain what we are looking for as the castle of the great magician, Alfrarmedj. We will, therefore, proceed thither, and sack the castle.'

'Will there not be great danger in attacking the castle of a magician?' asked the Stranger in somewhat anxious tones.

'Of course there will be,' said the Cap-

tain, 'but we are not such cowards as to hesitate on account of danger. Forward, my men!' And on they all marched.

When they reached the magician's castle, the order was given to scale the outer wall. This the robbers did with great agility, and the Hermit's Pupil was among the first to surmount it. But the Stranger was not used to climbing, and he had to be assisted over the wall. Inside the great court-yard they perceived numbers of Weirds—strange shadowy creatures who gathered silently around them; but not in the least appalled, the robbers formed into a body, and marched into the castle, the door of which stood open. They now entered a great hall, having at one end a doorway before which hung a curtain. Following their Captain, the robbers approached this curtain, and pushing it aside, entered the room beyond. There, behind a

large table, sat the great magician, Alfrarmedj, busy over his mystic studies, which he generally pursued in the dead hours of the night. Drawing their swords, the robbers rushed upon him.

'Surrender!' cried the Captain, 'and deliver to us the treasures of your castle.'

The old magician raised his head from his book, and, pushing up his spectacles from his forehead, looked at them mildly, and said:

'Freeze!'

Instantly, they all froze as hard as ice, each man remaining in the position in which he was when the magical word was uttered. With uplifted swords and glaring eyes they stood, rigid and stiff, before the magician. After calmly surveying the group, the old man said:

'I see among you one who has an intelligent brow and truthful expression. His

head may thaw sufficiently for him to tell me what means this untimely intrusion upon my studies.'

The Stranger now felt his head begin to thaw, and in a few moments he was able to speak. He then told the magician about the Queen's museum, and how it had happened that he had come there with the robbers.

'Your motive is a good one,' said the magician, 'though your actions are somewhat erratic; and I do not mind helping you to find what you wish. In what class of objects do the people of the city take the most interest?'

'Truly I do not know,' said the Stranger.

'This is indeed surprising!' exclaimed Alfrarmedj. 'How can you expect to obtain that which will interest every one, when you do not know what it is in which every one takes an interest? Go, find out

this, and then return to me, and I will see what can be done.'

The magician then summoned his Weirds and ordered them to carry the frozen visitors outside the castle walls. Each one of the rigid figures was taken up by two Weirds, who carried him out and stood him up in the road outside the castle. When all had been properly set up, with the Captain at their head, the gates were shut, and the magician still sitting at his table, uttered the word, 'Thaw!'

Instantly, the whole band thawed and marched away. At daybreak they halted, and considered how they should find out what all the people in the city took an interest in.

'One thing is certain,' cried the Hermit's Pupil, 'whatever it is, it isn't the same thing.'

'Your remark is not well put together,'

said the Stranger, 'but I see the force of it. It is true that different people like different things. But how shall we find out what the different people like?'

'By asking them,' said the Pupil.

'Good!' cried the Captain, who preferred action to words. 'This night we will ask them.'

He then drew upon the sand a plan of the city,—(with which he was quite familiar, having carefully robbed it for many years)—and divided it into twenty-eight sections, each one of which was assigned to a man. 'I omit you,' the Captain said to the Stranger, 'because I find that you are not expert at climbing.' He then announced that at night the band would visit the city, and that each man should enter the houses in his district, and ask the people what it was in which they took the greatest interest.

They then proceeded to the cave for rest and refreshment; and a little before midnight they entered the city, and each member of the band, including the Hermit's Pupil, proceeded to attend to the business assigned to him. It was ordered that no one should disturb the Queen, for they knew that what she took most interest in was the museum. During the night nearly every person in the town was aroused by a black-bearded robber, who had climbed into one of the windows of the house, and who, instead of demanding money and jewels, simply asked what it was in which that person took the greatest interest. Upon receiving an answer, the robber repeated it until he had learned it by heart, and then went to the next house. As so many of the citizens were confined in prisons, which the robbers easily entered, they transacted the business in much

less time than they would otherwise have required.

The Hermit's Pupil was very active, climbing into and out of houses with great agility. He obtained his answers quite as easily as did the others, but whenever he left a house there was a shade of disappointment upon his features. Among the last places that he visited was a room in which two boys were sleeping. He awoke them and asked the usual question. While they were trembling in their bed, not knowing what to answer, the Pupil drew his sword and exclaimed: 'Come, now, no prevarication; you know it's fishing-tackle. Speak out!' Each of the boys then promptly declared it was fishing-tackle, and the Pupil left, greatly gratified. 'I was very much afraid,' he said to himself, 'that not a person in my district would say fishing-tackle; and I am glad to think that

there were two boys who had sense enough to like something that is really interesting.'

It was nearly daylight when the work was finished; and then the band gathered together in an appointed place on the outside of the city, where the Stranger awaited them. Each of the men had an excellent memory, which was necessary in their profession, and they repeated to the Stranger all the objects and subjects that had been mentioned to them, and he wrote them down upon tablets.

The next night, accompanied by the band, he proceeded to the castle of the magician, the great gate of which was silently opened for them by the Weirds. When they were ushered into the magician's room, Alfrarmedj took the tablets from the Stranger and examined them carefully.

'All these things should make a very complete collection,' he said, 'and I think I have specimens of the various objects in my interminable vaults.' He then called his Weirds and, giving one of them the tablets, told him to go with his companions into the vaults and gather enough of the things therein mentioned to fill a large museum. In half an hour the Weirds returned and announced that the articles were ready in the great court-yard.

'Go, then,' said the magician, 'and assist these men to carry them to the Queen's museum.'

The Stranger then heartily thanked Alfrarmedj for the assistance he had given; and the band, accompanied by a number of Weirds, proceeded to carry the objects of interest to the Queen's museum. It was a strange procession. Half a dozen Weirds carried a stuffed mammoth, followed by

others bearing the skeleton of a whale, while the robbers and the rest of their queer helpers were loaded with everything relating to history, science, and art, which ought to be in a really good museum. When the whole collection had been put in place upon the floors, the shelves, and in the cases, it was nearly morning. The robbers, with the Hermit's Pupil, retired to the cave; the Weirds disappeared; while the Stranger betook himself to the Queen's palace, where, as soon as the proper hour arrived, he requested an audience.

When he saw the Queen, he perceived that she was very pale and that her cheeks bore traces of recent tears. 'You are back in good time,' she said to him, 'but it makes very little difference whether you have succeeded in your mission or not. There is no longer any museum. There has been a

great robbery, and the thieves have carried off the whole of the vast and valuable collection which I have been so long in making.'

'I know of that affair,' said the Stranger, 'and I have already placed in your museum-building the collection which I have obtained. If your Majesty pleases, I shall be glad to have you look at it. It may, in some degree, compensate for that which has been stolen.'

'Compensate!' cried the Queen. 'Nothing can compensate for it; I do not even wish to see what you have brought.'

'Be that as your Majesty pleases,' said the Stranger; 'but I will be so bold as to say that I have great hopes that the collection which I have obtained will interest the people. Will your Majesty graciously allow them to see it?'

'I have no objection to that,' said the

Queen; 'and indeed I shall be very glad if they can be made to be interested in the museum. I will give orders that the prisons be opened, so that everybody can go to see what you have brought; and those who shall be interested in it may return to their homes. I did not release my obstinate subjects when the museum was robbed, because their fault then was just as great as it was before; and it would not be right that they should profit by my loss.'

The Queen's proclamation was made, and for several days the museum was crowded with people moving from morning till night through the vast collection of stuffed animals, birds, and fishes; rare and brilliant insects; mineral and vegetable curiosities; beautiful works of art; and all the strange, valuable, and instructive objects which had been brought from the interminable vaults of the magician Alfra-

rmedj. The Queen's officers, who had been sent to observe whether or not the people were interested, were in no doubt upon this point. Every eye sparkled with delight, for every one found something which was the very thing he wished to see; and in the throng was the Hermit's Pupil, standing in rapt ecstasy before a large case containing all sorts of fishing-tackle, from the smallest hooks for little minnows to the great irons and spears used in capturing whales.

No one went back to prison, and the city was full of re-united households and happy homes. On the morning of the fourth day, a grand procession of citizens came to the palace to express to the Queen their delight and appreciation of her museum. The great happiness of her subjects could but please the Queen. She called the Stranger to her, and said to him:

'Tell me how you came to know what it was that would interest my people.'

'I asked them,' said the Stranger. 'That is to say, I arranged that they should be asked.'

'That was well done,' said the Queen; 'but it is a great pity that my long labors in their behalf should have been lost. For many years I have been a collector of button-holes; and there was nothing valuable or rare in the line of my studies of which I had not an original specimen or a facsimile. My agents brought me from foreign lands, even from the most distant islands of the sea, button-holes of every kind; in silk, in wool, in cloth of gold, in every imaginable material, and of those which could not be obtained careful copies were made. There was not a duplicate specimen in the whole collection; only one of each kind; nothing repeated.

Never before was there such a museum. With all my power I strove to educate my people up to an appreciation of button-holes; but, with the exception of a few tailors and seamstresses, nobody took the slightest interest in what I had provided for their benefit. I am glad that my people are happy, but I cannot restrain a sigh for the failure of my efforts.'

'The longer your Majesty lives,' said the Stranger, 'the better you will understand that we cannot make other people like a thing simply because we like it ourselves.'

'Stranger,' said the Queen, gazing upon him with admiration, 'are you a king in disguise?'

'I am,' he replied.

'I thought I perceived it,' said the Queen, 'and I wish to add that I believe you are far better able to govern this kingdom than I am. If you choose I will resign it to you.'

'Not so, your Majesty,' said the other; 'I would not deprive you of your royal position, but I should be happy to share it with you.'

'That will answer very well,' said the Queen. And turning to an attendant, she gave orders that preparations should be made for their marriage on the following day.

After the royal wedding, which was celebrated with great pomp and grandeur, the Queen paid a visit to the museum, and, much to her surprise, was greatly delighted and interested. The King then informed her that he happened to know where the robbers had stored her collection, which they could not sell or make use of, and if she wished, he would regain the collection and erect a building for its reception.

'We will not do that at present,' said the

Queen. 'When I shall have thoroughly examined and studied all these objects, most of which are entirely new to me, we will decide about the button-holes.'

The Hermit's Pupil did not return to his cave. He was greatly delighted with the spice and dash of a robber's life, so different from that of a hermit; and he determined, if possible, to change his business and enter the band. He had a conversation with the Captain on the subject, and that individual encouraged him in his purpose.

'I am tired,' the Captain said, 'of a robber's life. I have stolen so much, that I cannot use what I have. I take no further interest in accumulating spoils. The quiet of a hermit's life attracts me; and, if you like we will change places. I will become the pupil of your old master, and you shall be the captain of my band.'

The change was made. The Captain retired to the cave of the Hermit's Pupil, while the latter, with the hearty consent of all the men, took command of the band of robbers.

When the King heard of this change, he was not at all pleased, and he sent for the ex-pupil.

'I am willing to reward you,' he said, 'for assisting me in my recent undertaking; but I cannot allow you to lead a band of robbers in my dominions.'

A dark shade of disappointment passed over the ex-pupil's features, and his face lengthened visibly.

'It is too bad,' he said, 'to be thus cut short at the very outset of a brilliant career. I'll tell you what I'll do,' he added suddenly, his face brightening, 'if you'll let me keep on in my new profession, I'll promise to do nothing but rob robbers.'

'Very well,' said the King, 'if you will confine yourself to that, you may retain your position.'

The members of the band were perfectly willing to rob in the new way, for it seemed quite novel and exciting to them. The first place they robbed was their own cave, and as they all had excellent memories, they knew from whom the various goods had been stolen, and everything was returned to its proper owner. The ex-pupil then led his band against the other dens of robbers in the kingdom, and his movements were conducted with such dash and vigor that the various hordes scattered in every direction, while the treasures in their dens were returned to the owners, or, if these could not be found, were given to the poor. In a short time every robber, except those led by the ex-pupil, had gone into some other business; and the victori-

ous youth led his band into other kingdoms to continue the great work of robbing robbers.

The Queen never sent for the collection of curiosities which the robbers had stolen from her. She was so much interested in the new museum that she continually postponed the re-establishment of her old one; and, as far as can be known, the button-holes are still in the cave where the robbers shut them up.

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